



MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment

FROM: Jennifer Steingasser, Deputy Director

DATE: April 14, 2009

SUBJECT: BZA Application 17913- Request filed by Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman, LLP for a **special exception** to construct new academic and athletic facilities and a below grade parking garage, and an **area variance** for a nonconforming closed courtyard, proposed by Gonzaga College High for 19 Eye Street, N.W.

APPLICATION

Application of Gonzaga College High School for a:

1. **Special Exception pursuant to 11 DCMR § 206** for a private school to construct new facilities for academic and athletic uses, and a below grade garage; and an
2. **Area Variance pursuant to § 406.1** to reduce the width of a closed court from 22 feet to 14 feet, five inches

for property located on the west side of North Capitol Street, N.W., between H Street and K Street, 19 Eye Street, N.W., Square 622, Lots 90 and 840.

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning recommends **APPROVAL** of the application, subject to the implementation of the Transportation Management Plan.

HISTORY

March 21, 1973 the Board granted **Application No. 11292** for a special exception to permit the expansion of private school facilities to include a gymnasium.

July 23, 1974 the Board granted **Application No. 11661** for:

- Variances to rear yard and floor area ratio requirements of the C-2-A Zone District;
- A special exception to reduce the required parking by 25 percent;
- A variance to reduce parking by an additional 5 percent; and
- Approval of roof structures for the construction of a community building.

November 17, 1976 the Board granted **Application No. 12244** for a special exception to allow for a gymnasium-activities building.

September 21, 1983 the Board granted **Application No. 14022** to allow the use of 49 I Street, N.W. as a private school facility within the R-4 Zone District.

December 16, 1998 the Board granted **Application No. 16403** for a special exception to construct an addition, upgrade and renovate existing campus buildings and school grounds in the R-4 and C-2-A Zone Districts, subject to the following conditions:

- “1. The school shall have a capacity of 900 students and a maximum faculty and staff component of 110.*
- 2. The applicant shall ensure that there is no adverse impact from vermin on the surrounding neighborhood, due to any activities of the school.”*

January 24, 2006 the Board granted **Application No. 17409** for a special exception to increase the number of students to 980 and the number of faculty and staff to 120.

SITE AND AREA DESCRIPTION

Square: 622	Lots: 90 and 840	Quadrant: North West
Area: 7.65 acres	Lot Width: 596.17 feet	Zones: R-4, C-2-A and C-3-C
Building Restriction Line: None		Public Alley: 11 to 18-foot widths
Improvements: Church, school buildings, athletic field and 210 off-street parking spaces		

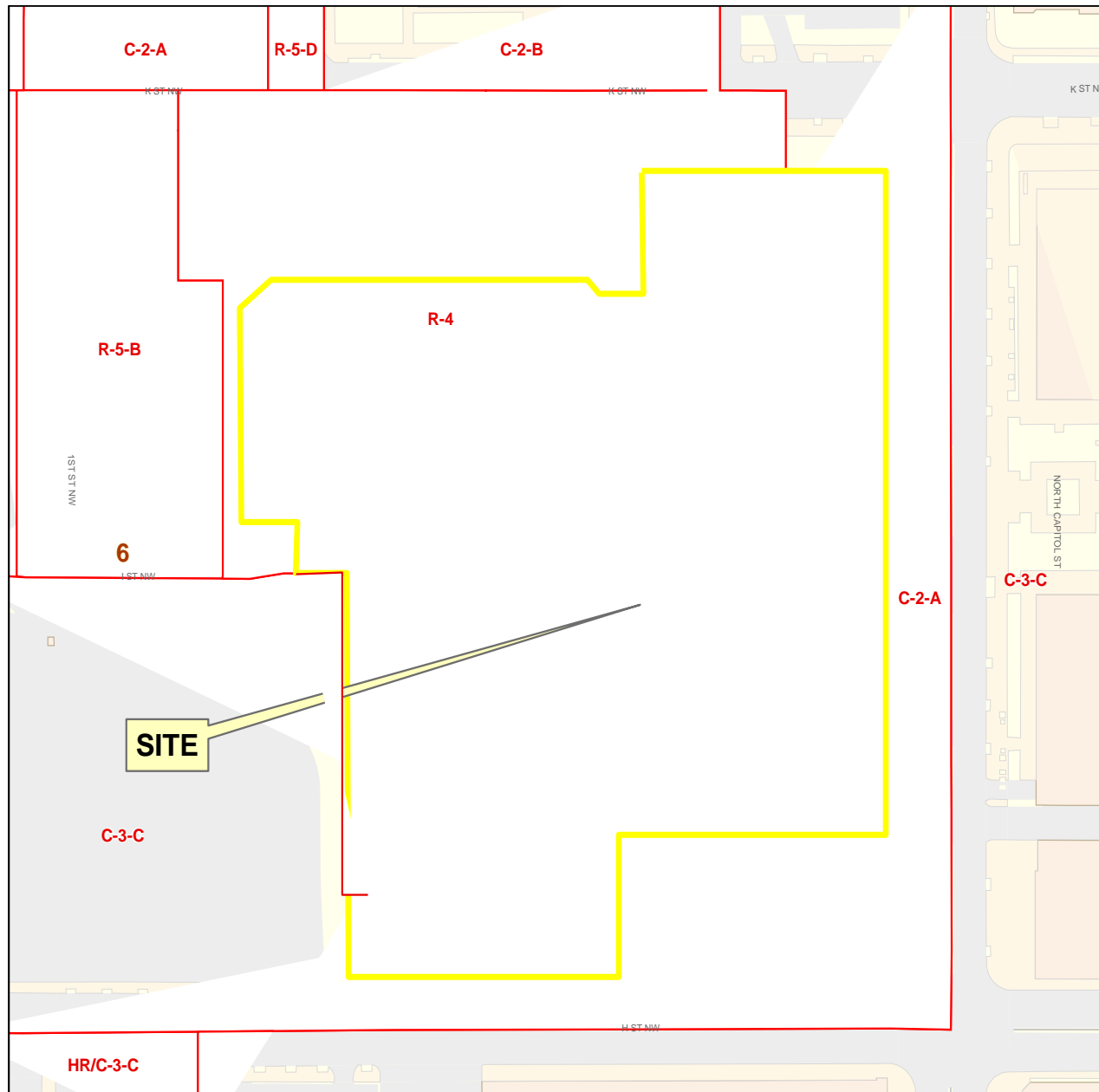
The site is split zoned between three districts, C-2-A, R-4 and C-3-C. The H Street frontage of the property is located within the C-3-C and is currently paved and used as either tennis courts or parking. The C-2-A is located along the North Capitol Street frontage of the site, and includes a portion of Buchanan Field, a portion of St. Aloysius, a historic church, and Cantwell Hall, an academic building. The remainder of the site and improvements are located within the R-4 district. School buildings within the R-4 district include the Carmody Gymnasium and a theater; Forte Hall, a former apartment building; and other school and church related buildings. A quad is located internal to the campus.

An easement separates the school buildings and church from Buchanan Field. This easement is 45 feet in width and connects North Capitol Street with I Street, and is a remnant of a closed portion of I Street. It can have no buildings constructed within it without approval, and must remain open for emergency access and the continued operation and maintenance of underground utilities.

The church on the subject property, Saint Aloysius, is a landmarked building.

Surrounding Properties:

North:	Across the public alley, row houses within the R-4 Zone District.
South:	An office building. Across H Street is the Government Printing Office. All properties to the south are located within the C-3-C Zone District.
East:	Across North Capitol Street, office buildings within the C-3-C Zone District.
West:	Surface parking lots within the C-3-C Zone District. Across the public alley is a nursing home within the R-5-B Zone District.



Vicinity Map

Zone Districts:

R-4: *“The R-4 District is designed to include those areas now developed primarily with row dwellings, but within which there have been a substantial number of conversions of the dwellings into dwellings for two (2) or more families.” (§ 330.1)*

C-2-A: *“The C-2-A District is designed to provide facilities for shopping and business needs, housing, and mixed uses for large segments of the District of Columbia outside of the central core.” (§ 720.2)*

C-3-C: *“The C-3 District is designed to accommodate major business and employment centers supplementary to the Central Business (C-4) District.” (§ 740.1)*

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant proposes to rebuild Buchanan Field to regulation size for football, soccer and lacrosse, including ADA compliant bleachers, and construct a concession stand with a press box above at the 50-yard line. The existing brick wall on the north side of the bleachers would be removed and replaced in the same location following construction of a below grade 250-space two-level parking garage beneath Buchanan Field.

The existing east-west I Street easement would continue to provide one-way traffic westbound from North Capitol Street. Access to the garage would be from the northwestern corner of the field, near the I Street cul-de-sac west of the subject property. Westbound traffic would access the garage from the easement by going around the I Street cul-de-sac and into the garage. Eastbound I Street traffic would enter the garage directly. The existing driveway from H Street running along the western edge of the southern portion of the site would be eliminated to allow for the enlargement of Buchanan Field, and would also allow for the consolidation of C-3-C zoned land on H Street to be ground leased for future development. A total of 278 parking spaces would be provided on-site, in excess of the required 194 spaces.

The application contains a Transportation Management Plan that the applicant would commit to implement. That plan includes the following:

1. *“Increase vehicle occupancies (i.e. carpooling) with appropriate consideration for the classification of young drivers who access the School as well as in keeping with the regulations applying to teenage driving and the number of passengers allows (as per local District of Columbia laws).*
2. *Encourage the use of public transportation by staff and students.*
3. *Monitor traffic operations within the campus during the peak drop off/pick up periods to ensure efficient operations and that no “spill back” occurs on the adjacent public roadways.*
4. *Assign a staff member with the specific responsibility to co-ordinate carpools among students, parents and staff. In addition, Gonzaga will create an online system to help identify those with similar travel routes and residence locations.*
5. *Host regular discussions with the student drivers on road safety, courtesy and the local laws and regulations of the jurisdictions in which they drive.*
6. *Provide a copy of the School’s Transportation Management Plan and its traffic and transportation policies to all students, parents and staff at the beginning of each school year as part of the student enrollment contract.*
7. *Designate a Campus Transportation Coordinator with the responsibility of implementing the School’s Transportation Management Plan as enumerated in the items above.*
8. *Undertake monitoring and evaluation of the TMP and make adjustments as necessary to meet the stipulated objectives. Furthermore, Gonzaga will provide a Transportation Performance Report to the Policy and Planning Administration Staff of DDOT and the ANC on an annual basis.”*

As a part of implementing the Transportation Management Plan, the applicant would propose to increase average vehicle occupancies from two to three. The application indicates that 75 students currently access the site via public transportation.

The I Street easement would be rebuilt with 12 new parallel parking spaces, a five-foot wide sidewalk on the south side of the easement, and shade trees between every two parallel spaces. Angled parking adjacent to the church and rectory would be eliminated, as would the stall spaces in front of the theater and Dooley Hall.

A sidewalk would be provided on the north side of the easement in front of all buildings, with the exception of the rectory, where existing electrical transformers block the installation of a sidewalk. Existing ornamental trees would line the north side of the easement, and would be supplemented with shade, additional ornamental and evergreen trees. A five-foot sidewalk would be provided on the south side of the easement to allow for pedestrian circulation between North Capitol Street and First Street, N.W.

The applicant also proposes to modify and improve the use of its athletic and academic buildings, to be accomplished through a variety of building additions, demolitions and renovations. As a part of that proposal the following construction is proposed:

- 3,900 square foot gymnasium addition to Carmody Gym;
- 4,400 square foot one-story theater support building;
- 44,100 square foot four-story athletic and academic addition to Carmody Gym;

The subject application also proposes the demolition of the Carmody East and Carmody Gym Support buildings, renovations to the Carmody Gym, and the reallocation of space.

No increases in the number of students or faculty and staff are proposed.

RELIEF REQUESTED:

Special Exception pursuant to § 206– Private Schools and Staff Residences

Section 206 sets forth the specific criteria under which Private Schools may be permitted within a residential district. Those provisions are as follows:

206.1 Use as a private school, but not including a trade school, and residences for teachers and staff of a private school, shall be permitted in an R-1 District if approved by the Board of Zoning Adjustment in accordance with the conditions specified in §3108 of chapter 31 of this title, subject to the provisions of this section.

This application is for the continuation of the existing private high school, which is not a trade school, and is predominantly located within an R-4 Zone District. The remainder of the site is located within either the C-2-A or C-3-C Zone Districts, which permit private schools as a matter of right.

206.2 The private school shall be located so that it is not likely to become objectionable to adjoining and nearby property because of noise, traffic, number of students, or otherwise objectionable conditions.

The application would result in no increase in number of students, faculty or staff. The renovations to the athletic buildings would enable the school to conduct additional athletic events inside, and not on Buchanan Field, reducing noise. Adequate off-street parking would continue to be provided, and parking would be relocated from surface parking lots to below grade garages. Building additions would be internal to the campus. A five-foot sidewalk would be provided

within the Eye Street Easement for pedestrian circulation between North Capitol Street and First Street, N.W.

Implementation of the Transportation Management Plan would help to ensure that the school would not become objectionable because of traffic. The traffic study submitted as a part of the application concludes that the proposed improvements would “*have no appreciable adverse traffic and parking impacts on the adjacent roadway network or adjacent properties.*” Therefore, the private school should not become objectionable to adjoining or nearby property.

206.3 Ample parking space, but not less than that required in chapter 21 of this title, shall be provided to accommodate the students, teachers, and visitors likely to come to the site by automobile.

The subject application proposes 278 off-street parking spaces, and 194 are required. Therefore, ample parking would be provided. The Office of Planning supports the applicant’s efforts at promoting carpooling and the use of transit.

Area Variance to pursuant to § 406.1 – Minimum Width of Closed Court

Section 406.1 of the Zoning Regulations requires a minimum closed court width of 4 inches per foot of height of court, but not less than 15 feet. In this case a minimum court width of 22 feet would be required and 14 feet, five inches would be provided.

Uniqueness

The subject property is unique in that it is a high school campus that has evolved over time since the establishment of the school on the site in 1911. As the school and associated facilities grew the property expanded with purpose-built and adaptively reused buildings, including an apartment house constructed in 1926. The applicant now proposes to update and modernize its facilities, while continuing to utilize this amalgam of buildings. The Theater Support Building must be located adjacent to the Theater in order to function properly.

Peculiar and Exceptional Practical Difficulty

New building construction would be necessary for the applicant to modernize and update the school campus. The nonconforming court would be the result of the construction of the Theater Support Building as it relates to Forte Hall, the former apartment building. Without either the removal of a portion of Forte Hall, or the scaling back of the Theater Support Building, which would reduce the usefulness and effectiveness of the modernization, the court cannot be made to conform to the Zoning Regulations. Therefore, it would also be a peculiar and practical difficulty to the applicant to not permit the requested reduction in width of the closed court.

Intent, Purpose and Integrity of the Zone Plan

The requested variance would not impair the intent, purpose and integrity of the Zone Plan. The requested reduction of the closed court would be the result of the construction of a one-story Theater Support Building as it abuts the five-story Forte Hall building. The resulting court would not be visible from surrounding properties as it would be internal to the site, and the variance would be necessary for a one-story building addition only.

The Historic Preservation Office had no comments on the application.

NOMA VISION PLAN AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The NoMa Plan recommends the extension of I Street through the subject property from First Street to North Capitol Street, “*perhaps as a partial pedestrian link only*,” and the provision of street trees along the former I Street right-of-way. The subject application is in conformance with these recommendations.

AGENCY COMMENTS

No comments were received from other District agencies.

COMMUNITY COMMENTS

ANC 6C, at their regularly scheduled meeting of April 7, 2008, voted in support of the application.

CONCLUSION

The Office of Planning has reviewed the application in terms of the property’s zoning, the intensity of use, the character of the neighborhood and the standards for special exception and variance relief. It is the Office of Planning’s conclusion that the applicant has satisfactorily met the criteria for variance and special exception relief of § 206 and “*that the relief can be granted without substantial detriment to the public good and without substantially impairing the intent, purpose, and integrity of the zone plan as embodied in the Zoning Regulations and Map*”. (§ 3103.2)

Therefore, the Office of Planning recommends **APPROVAL** of the following:

1. **Special Exception pursuant to 11 DCMR § 206** for a private school to construct new facilities for academic and athletic uses, and a below grade garage; and an
2. **Area Variance pursuant to § 406.1** to reduce the width of a closed court from 22 feet to 14 feet, five inches

subject to the implementation of the Transportation Management Plan as proposed in the application.

js/sjm_{AICP}

Case Manager: Stephen J. Mordfin, AICP